

GOD'S WHEAT FIELD

– MATTHEW 13:24-30,36-43. – JULY 28. –

Text: "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into My Garner." – Verse 30.

OUR International Sunday School Lessons are specially helpful this year. We are glad that the selection contains so many lessons on the Kingdom. This topic heretofore has not had sufficient consideration, considering its prominence in the Bible – from the promise made to Abraham, recorded in Genesis, to the records of Revelation, representing the full establishment of the Kingdom, its binding of Satan, and its thousand years of prosperity, resulting in the bringing of "every creature in heaven and in earth" to worship and praise the Almighty, and in the abolishment of sin, tears and death. – Gen. 22:18; Rev. 20:2; 21:4; 5:13.

Today's study is another of the Kingdom parables, and one of the few which the Master particularly explained, and in harmony with which all the other parables are to be interpreted. Again it is the embryo Kingdom that is pictured, and not the Kingdom in glory; in other words, this parable also relates to this Gospel Age, and the work of selecting the Church. It therefore pictures the entire Age from start to finish.

"THE FIELD IS THE WORLD"

Our Lord's personal ministry was to the Jews only, and likewise His disciples labored only with the Jews for the fixed period of time – until the end of "the seventy weeks" of the promise of Divine favor to that nation. Those symbolic weeks ended three and a half years after Jesus' crucifixion. Then the door was thrown open to the Gentiles also, Cornelius being the first Convert. – Acts 10.

This parable also shows us the very commencement of the Lord's call for His Bride from amongst all nations, and not from the Jews alone,

although in the Divine Plan it was necessary that they should have the first opportunity. So St. Paul declares, saying to the Jews, "It was necessary that the Gospel should be preached first unto you, but seeing ye reject it,...lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46.) The entire world constituted the "field" for the sowing of the "good seed," and the "good seed" is not any and every kind of a message, but is strictly defined, "the Gospel of the Kingdom."

Jesus and the Apostles sowed this "good seed," and all His true followers since have been authorized to continue the work in His name, and have more or less done so. But the Adversary, Satan, as pointed out here in the parable, brought in false doctrines, false teachings, a different kind of seed from the Kingdom "seed," and sowed this everywhere over the wheat field. The result is that today the "tares" are so plentiful, and so conspicuous that they think they are the "wheat," and the world in general so considers them.

The wheat class are considered "a peculiar people." Their hopes and ambitions in life are toward bearing good [R5049 : page 199] fruit, and "showing forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness." Of their good fruits the Apostle mentions meekness and humility, and these tend to bow their heads, while the "tares" stand proudly up, erect, in the display of their "form of godliness," which, however, lacks the power.

"LET BOTH GROW TOGETHER"

The Lord knew all the time what Satan would do in the way of perverting the Truth through false doctrines, which would tend to make void and belittle the Gospel of the Kingdom and the children of the Kingdom; but He allowed the matter to go on, fully assured that He would have in the end the crop which He desired, and very content to allow a great lesson to be taught by the presence of the "tares" and the ultimate treatment accorded the "wheat."

The Lord could have hindered the Adversary from bringing in the false doctrines in the early centuries, or He could have separated centuries ago between the wheat and tare classes, but this was not according to His intention, as the parable shows. He purposed to "let both grow together until the Harvest." So it has been true that Christians and imitation Christians have lived side by side in the same city, in the same house, and oftentimes in the same family – the one the result of the true Gospel Message of the Kingdom, leading to a full consecration and begetting of the Holy Spirit, and to the entrance upon a new life; the other with merely "a form of godliness," intermixed with worldly wisdom, earthly ambitions and selfish desires.

But the tares are not to grow on forever. Just as surely as there was a beginning of this Age, there will be an ending. As surely as there was a sowing time for the good seed, there will be a reaping time, a Harvest time. In the Common Version the Words, "The Harvest is the end of the world," have been seriously misunderstood. It does not mean the end of time, nor the end of the earth – its destruction – nor the end of Divine favor. It merely means the end of the present Age – the close of the present dispensation. This Age will close when it has accomplished its intended work – when the full number of God's elect shall have been found faithful and ready for the "garner."

"IN THE TIME OF THE HARVEST"

This expression signifies that the Harvest of this Age will not be an instantaneous work, but a gradual one, requiring *time*. There is good reason for believing that the Harvest of this Age is a period of forty years, as the Harvest of the Jewish Age was of that length. In this time of the Harvest two things will be accomplished: (1) The tares will be gathered into bundles, ready for the burning – destruction. (2) The wheat, at the same time, will be gathered into the garner – the heavenly garner. This gathering into the heavenly garner is elsewhere represented as being the change from earthly to heavenly conditions, which will be accomplished for the Bride class in the end of the harvest, by the first

resurrection. These [R5049 : page 200] will "all die like men." At the appointed time their resurrection change will take place and be invisible to men – "sown in weakness, raised in power; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown an animal body, raised a spirit body"; "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." – I Cor. 15:42-44; Rev. 20:6.

BURNING OF THE TARES.

"They shall gather out of His Kingdom all things which offend, and them which do iniquity;...there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Let us remember that these tares are not all of the world of mankind, but merely that portion of them associated with the Kingdom class – that portion which now verily believe that they are God's people, as the Pharisees considered themselves in the Harvest of the Jewish Age. There will be two classes amongst these tares: one class, "doers of iniquity (inequity, unrighteousness), the other class, those that have caused others to stumble. Doubtless this will include many teachers and preachers, and many doers of wonderful works.

But we must not forget that we are considering a parable, and that the "tares" are symbolical, and likewise the "furnace" and the "fire." The interpretation is that, in the end of this Age, the Harvest time, there will be a great "time of trouble" for all nations, society, governments, financial institutions, etc. The wheat class will be saved from that "time of trouble" by the resurrection change. But the tares will not be saved from it; they will be cast into the trouble and have their portion with the hypocrites.

That trouble will not last forever. Many Scriptures seem to show that it will be terrific but of very short duration. It will be on the earth, and not in some far-off place. When the fire of that great day of anarchy and trouble shall cease to burn, there will be no more tares, there will be no more people having mere forms of godliness and pretensions for the Kingdom, begotten of error. All humanity will be greatly humbled, and, according to the Scriptures, ready and anxious for Messiah's

Kingdom, which will then be established. It will be "the desire of all nations." (Hag. 2:7). Those formerly tares, as well as the remainder of the groaning creation, will welcome it and its blessings. In that Kingdom the righteous, the garnered, glorified wheat class "shall shine forth as the sun" for the blessing of all the families of the earth. – Matt. 13:43; Gal. 3:29.

